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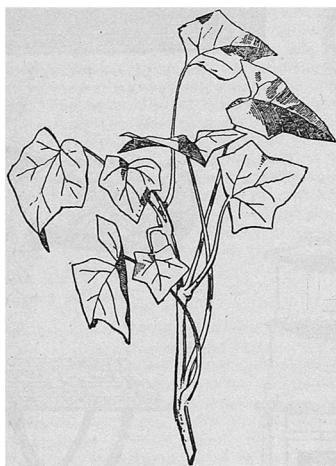
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

HOW JAPANESE WALL PAPER IS MADE.

ONE of the most remarkable of the many remarkable institutions in Japan is the Imperial printing department, known as "In Satsu Kiyoku," literally the "stamping bank-note office." This department, like all others established on European principles, is still in its infancy, but, like the system of railway traffic, works with surprising ease. It was founded about 15 years ago, and within it was established the first regular industry of the regenerated country, regular, that is to say, in its rules and their enforcement, and in its fixed hours of work. How difficult the adoption of habits of precision and punctuality must have been to people to whom time was no object few can appreciate. But those who have seen the beneficent results of that wonderful step forward, who have seen not one, not a dozen, but literally hundreds of similar institutions springing up all over the country, springing up too, on good soil and flourishing, bear witness to the thoroughness with which these habits have been inculcated, to the deep root they have taken among the people, and to the influence for good which they have had upon the national character.

The employment of womankind, too, is another sign of the times, and of all the revolutions this perhaps is the most wonderful. All the printing of the State is done at this office, from the primers for the Educational Department, the stamps and cards for the Post Office, to the paper "yen" notes with which so large a part of the retail business of the country is conducted. These yen notes, too, have their own story to tell—of that astonishing financial feat whereby the heaven-born Japanese Chancellor of the Exchequer, apparently by a stroke of the pen (for that was all the public saw or heard of the operation), cancelled



for good and all the fluctuation between the value of silver and paper money.

In walking through the long passages of the handsome European building the visitor finds himself at home at once. Here, as there, there is the chatter and the bustle and the laughter, the sudden ringing of a bell, the troops of workmen and women, boys and girls, returning swiftly to their labor, the buzz of wheels, the endless click of machinery—the whole paraphernalia of a Western workshop. Curiosity gives place to wonder, and wonder to profound admiration for the pluck and energy of the people who are accomplishing so many and such great achievements. The centre of attraction, however, is the department in which the exquisitely-embossed wall papers of Japan are produced. Very little of this embossed paper is sold in Japan itself, except in the European houses which are springing up in the capital, and the manufacture is almost solely for export. However this may be, I am certain that this wall paper is one of the few things made by Japanese for the foreign market which bears the impress of the true artistic genius of the country. The designs are original, full of bold tracery, and entirely free from those drawings of sprays and flowers coming from nowhere which people in the West have long thought to be the highest embodiment of Japanese art. They are for the most part in a style which agrees more nearly with Western decoration, but which appears to come just as easily to the Japanese draughtsman as that which for some mysterious reason found such favor in England. The paper is, moreover, entirely hand made from first to last.

The design to be embossed is cut on a cylinder of very hard wood, which is fixed on a revolving frame. On this are laid

pieces of rough Japanese paper about two feet square. This paper, which is exceedingly tough, is made from the paper plant known to botanists as *Edgeworthia papyrifera*, which makes many a garden gay with its bright globular cluster of flowers in the early spring. All but the first of these pieces of paper, which are about six yards in length, are pasted, three or four going to make the required thickness. Two small boys stand one at either end of the cylinder armed with small long-handled brushes thickset with soft bristles, and when they have arranged the layers of pasted paper upon it they begin vigorously hammering it with their brushes, turning the cylinder as each section is finished. The cylinder, in fact, forms the mould, and the paper when finished is a kind of *repoussé* work. When it is thoroughly dried it receives its first ornamentation, which is invariably tin-metal. In a greater number of cases the embossed pattern is of gold or silver on a groundwork of color. In this case the whole of the piece is covered with the metal, the colored ground being stencilled in afterwards. To fix the thin sheets of gold or silver recourse is had again to thickset soft brushes. This time, as so much force is not required, they are wielded by girls. The metal fixed, the piece passes into the hands of another bevy of girls, who rub the color on through the stencil-plates with a dexterity and rapidity which is almost bewildering. Owing to the rough manner in which the paper is beaten out it frequently happens that the pattern does not come out quite regularly. The stencilling girls have to be on the alert for any of these irregularities, and have to move the plates in order to prevent the color overlapping the design. The girls work in pairs opposite to one another, each taking half the breadth of the paper, which is about three feet wide. Each one is followed by an attendant, brush in hand, who wipes away any slips, and fills in the joints left by the plater. This practically concludes



the process, the rolls of paper being then sent off to the Tokio agency to supply the orders which come in fast from every quarter of the globe.

LEAF IMPRESSIONS IN DECORATION.

THE study of the forms of leaves and stalks and their arrangement is so essential to progress in designing decoration for walls and other surfaces that we here furnish our readers with an admirable method of taking off impressions of these. Such impressions may be kept in an album for future reference. Take half a sheet of fine wove paper and oil it well with sweet oil; after it has soaked through rub off the superfluous oil with a piece of paper and let it hang in the air to dry; after the oil has pretty well dried in move the paper slowly over a candle in a horizontal direction till it is perfectly black. The plant is now to be carefully laid on the blackened surface and rubbed with the finger equally in all parts for about half a minute. The plant is then taken up and placed on the book or paper that is to receive the impression, then covered with blotting paper and rubbed with the finger for a short time. The paper receives the impression of the most minute veins and equal to the finest engraving. The same piece of blackened paper will serve to take off a great number of impressions. Another mode of obtaining the true shape and fibres of a leaf is to rub the back of it gently with any hard substance so as to bruise the fibres; then to apply a small quantity of linseed oil to these edges after which the leaf is pressed on white paper. On removing it a perfectly correct representation of every ramification will appear. Whichever of these two modes is followed the impressions may be afterwards colored according to nature.